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## Exploration and Discovery

The following excerpt from a personal letter from Professor Breasted, who is now in Berlin, will be of great interest to all Bible students:

I cannot forbear adding a word on the surprising discovery which I was permitted to hear as presented to the Royal Academy by Sachau, the day I took my seat there for the first time last week. Among Aramaic papyri found on the Island of Elephantine at the foot of the First Cataract opposite Aswan by Dr. Rubensohn last winter is a perfectly preserved letter written on both sides of a sheet of papyrus, about 9 x 12 inches, in good Aramaic. It was addressed by the high-priest of the temple of Jehovah on Elephantine to the Persian governor of Palestine in the fourteenth year of Darius II (410 B. C.), complaining to him that the high-priest of the Egyptian god Khnum at Elephantine has, during a revolt against Persia, taken advantage of the opportunity to destroy the temple of Jehovah on Elephantine, which the Hebrews there had been permitted to build by the Egyptian kings before the Persians took Egypt, that is before 525 B. C. Sanballat is mentioned. Found with the letter is a long list of Hebrew names, each followed by a numeral giving an amount in shekels: 1 shekel, 3 shekels, 5 shekels, or the like. This is probably a subscription list for the rebuilding of the temple, for undertaking which the above letter asks permission and support. The surprising fact (already known to us from the papyri discovered at this same place in 1904) is revealed that the generation immediately succeeding Jeremiah built a temple in the remotest corner of Egypt, even though the orthodox faith of Jeremiah's time regarded Jerusalem as the sole legal site for the temple of Jehovah. Isa. 19:18 predicts that in five places in Egypt Jehovah shall be worshiped. There may have been other temples of Jehovah in Egypt then, and the passage in Isaiah will have been a gloss inserted in their defense (?). Why does not such a letter as this deserve a place in the Old Testament as much as the Persian documents in the later books? What we hope for now is a fragment of some Old Testament book, as the site is by no means cleared. I visited the excavations there in March. The Germans had quietly left, saying nothing of their find. The French, who have a concession of one-half of the site, were still at work under a young subordinate. Clermont-Ganneau, who had hoped especially for Aramaic documents (they have been found there before), had been in command but he had left, having found none. The final fact of interest is that the foundations (or if finally rebuilt, some of the structure itself) of this temple of Jehovah must still lie beneath the ruins on the site. Excavation, therefore, may disclose the only surviving temple of Jehovah and the only one known outside of Jerusalem.

In an article which is to be published in the forthcoming *William Rainey Harper Memorial* volumes, Professor Breasted, Director of the

Egyptian Section of The Oriental Exploration Fund of the University of Chicago, gives an account of "A New Temple and Town of Ikhnaton in Nubia." This temple of Sesebi is situated at the foot of the First Cataract of the Nile in the heart of the most inaccessible region of Nubia. The place was visited, among others, by Calliand in 1821 and by Lepsius in 1844. Budge visited it in 1905 with a view to excavation, which, however, was not undertaken. Professor Breasted spent two days there in 1907. He was able, during his brief stay there, to discover that this temple was not built by Seti I, but only appropriated by him.

After a description of the reliefs of Seti I (with numerous cuts) Professor Breasted writes:

In this rapid survey of Seti I's reliefs the reader will probably have been disturbed by intrusive figures. There is a noticeably intrusive symbol on all three columns. It generally breaks into the royal ovals of Seti I, and is so large that it may be seen at a distance. I refer to the deeply cut disk at the top in the center of Seti's reliefs. Beginning to make a record of Seti's reliefs I first attacked the southern column. I was immediately greatly puzzled by this disk. It seemed to have been cut after Seti's inscriptions, as it so sharply interrupts them. But, when I considered its position on the other columns, and perceived that it was in all three cases in the middle of the side facing the middle aisle, I conjectured that it was one of the deeply cut sun-disks appearing at the top in the middle of Ikhnaton's adoration scenes, and that such scenes had once stood where we now find those of Seti I. I added the mental reservation that I would never be able to prove the conjecture, and would never think of publishing it. This was during the first five minutes of work. I went on with an examination of the southern column. Having passed from the figure of Amon at the right, to that of the other supposed divinity standing behind him, I was endeavoring to discern the head, when I was suddenly confronted by the familiar outlines of Ikhnaton's figure, dimly discernible through the barbarous chisel marks of intentional expunction. All the peculiar and unmistakable lines were there. I glanced at the other columns, now knowing where to look and what to look for. He was there on all the others also. These were palimpsest columns and this was a temple of the great revolutionary, the first and only one known in Nubia. Indeed, they were then the only surviving monuments of his thus far discovered in Nubia. Furthermore, no other columns of the great heretic anywhere, whether in Egypt or Nubia, have escaped destruction. It is therefore imperative to demonstrate beyond all doubt that he was their builder and the author of the reliefs, over which those of Seti I have been superimposed. . . .

After a careful study of the southern column, he continues:

When this column was appropriated by Seti I, his sculptors chiseled out the reliefs of Ikhnaton as far as possible, but the royal figures and especially the sun-disk were too deeply cut to be completely erased, while some of the smaller

things, like the titles of Ikhnaton's queen, were overlooked or neglected. When the work of erasure and destruction was complete, the defaced surface of the column was filled out, patched, and smoothed with stucco. The reliefs of Seti were then sculptured upon this new surface, partially in the hard stucco patching, partially in the sandstone of the column. Fresh coloring over the whole concealed the stucco patching, and the fraud was only discernible when the colors had disappeared and the weather of centuries had loosened all the stucco till the last vestige of it had fallen out, carrying with it large portions of Seti's reliefs and inscriptions and in places causing their complete disappearance. Thus it is that his cartouches, or the name of his god, are now cut into by Ikhnaton's sun-disk, producing the impression that the sun-disk is a later insertion, defacing the reliefs of Seti I. Likewise the figure of Seti himself generally falls almost directly over that of Ikhnaton, so that his *disappearance*, when the stucco fell out involved the *reappearance* of Ikhnaton's form. It is important to recall, at this point, that in Egypt, it is precisely Seti I who so often records his restoration of the iconoclastic work of Ikhnaton. It is therefore just what we should expect, when we find him here undoing the work of Ikhnaton in Nubia. . . .

In summing up the history of the temple, Professor Breasted says:

It is quite evident that we have here a colonnaded temple hall, of which the original author was the great revolutionary Ikhnaton. His reliefs show every characteristic of his monotheistic period, and it cannot be doubted that the building was a sun-temple built by him, the only one from this remarkable man's reign of which any portion is still standing. His reign, after the inauguration of his solar monotheism, continued only ten to twelve years, and in such remote and inaccessible regions of Nubia, it is inconceivable that he could have in so short a time, erected any number of temples to his exclusive god. The reader will recall also that in the inscriptions just one sanctuary of Aton in Nubia is known to us. In the itinerary of King Nastesen, given on his Berlin stela, dating not long after 525 B. C., a town called Gm-Ytn is visited by the king. Schaefer had located this town in the vicinity of the Third Cataract, on the basis of the references to it by Nastesen. Not long after this the present writer called attention to the fact that in a Theban tomb the sun-temple of Ikhnaton at Thebes bears the name Gm-Ytn. It immediately became evident that the Nubian Gm-Ytn must have been a sun-city and sanctuary founded and named by Ikhnaton, a foundation like that of el-Amarna, its purpose in Nubia being of course like that of el-Amarna in Egypt. When one recalls, that without any prepossessions as to the character or origin of the place, Schaefer located it in the vicinity of the Third Cataract, and that we have now found a sun-temple of Ikhnaton at the foot of the Third Cataract, it becomes evident that our newly found sun-temple of Sesebi is the ancient Gm-Ytn. . . .

The origin of the place is therefore evident and in the main its early history clear. Ikhnaton (Amenhotep IV) in his unparalleled religious revolution about

1370 B. C., sought to bring his whole empire under the dominion of one god. As the new religious and political capital in Egypt he founded Akhet-Aton (Tell el-Amarna). But the same must be done for the foreign possessions of the empire, adjacent Asia and Nubia. . . .

In Nubia he erected at the foot of the Third Cataract our temple, now called Sesebi, and built with it a walled town. He named the place Gem-Aton (Gm-Yton), after the sanctuary of his god Aton, already existent at Thebes. The religious character of the place, as a seat of the sun-god Aton, was thus made evident in the name. At the fall of Ikhnaton the Aton-temple at Amarna, as well as all the other Aton-sanctuaries throughout Egypt were destroyed, and the fragments have occasionally been found built into temples of Ikhnaton's successors. In distant Nubia, however, the temple of Gem-Aton was at a safe remove from the wrath of Ikhnaton's enemies. It escaped the first outburst, and survived through the reign of Harmhab. The people continued to call it Gem-Aton, and fifty years after the death of Ikhnaton, the officials of Seti I found it, still bearing its heretical reliefs and inscriptions, representing the now deserted Ikhnaton and his queen, worshiping Aton in his temple. But they did not destroy it as in Egypt. Here, as at the neighboring Soleb, they hacked out the hated sculptures of the heretic, and covering up all trace of them with stucco, they wrought new sculptures on the columns and walls, depicting Seti I worshiping Amon. The place then became a temple of Aton's rival Amon. Its new official name we do not know. The people still continued to call it Gem-Aton. Long afterward, when the odium attaching to this name was forgotten, it gained recognition as the official name of the place. In the reign of Tirhaka, nearly seven hundred years after Ikhnaton's revolution, we find the town still mentioned, and its god was then officially called "Amon of Gem-Aton." Nearly a thousand years after its foundation by Ikhnaton, Amon, the god whom he so hated, was still worshiped there under the same name. From that time on we know nothing of the city or temple. When it fell into disuse after the Christianization of the country, the temple became a quarry for the neighboring kinglet. Thus the only surviving temple of Ikhnaton has been reduced to three columns, and their battered and weathered records are all that we possess to give us a hint of the unique origin of the place. What secrets of the world's first monotheist still lie hidden there, remain for the spade of the future excavator, who may penetrate into this inaccessible region.